

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

November 19, 2004

The Week Ahead

Mon., Nov. 22

Commissioner Miller delivers opening remarks to the Connecting for Children's Justice symposium.

Tue., Nov. 23

Commissioner Miller is the keynote speaker at Connecting for Children's Justice: A Symposium on Child Maltreatment.

DCS Retirements

DCS is bidding farewell to several employees.

Ann Hudson and **Carolyn Gore**, both CPS case managers in Henry County (Northwest Region), retired on October 31. Hudson and Gore had 32 and 20 years of service, respectively.

James Spears of Taft Youth Development Center retired on November 15, with more than 12 years of service.

Gary Fergie, an internal affairs officer at Wilder Youth Development Center, is retiring on November 30, after having served for 30 years. **Emma Bryant**, a trainer at Wilder, is also retiring on December 31 after 31 years and 6 months of service.

Ben Sparkman, a regional administrator for the Upper Cumberland Region, retired from state service on September 17, with 34 years of service. According to administrative secretary Jean Coffee, "He was the best, and he is truly missed by his staff here in the Upper Cumberland Region."

If you are retiring or know a DCS employee who has recently retired or will be retiring in the near future, please send such announcements to public information officer K. Danielle Edwards at K.Danielle.Edwards@state.tn.us.

A DCS Success Story

An incredible DCS success story recently came to our attention. According to Susan Kovac, "Eli is truly a child who would have died, but for DCS." The *Knoxville News Sentinel* recently ran a story on the adoption of this child. The story can be viewed by pasting the

following link into your Web browser:
http://web.knoxnews.com/healthsentinel/sickle_cell.cfm

Andrea Walks for Tennessee's Children

Submitted by Becky Phelps

All of you are aware that the First Lady is walking her way across Tennessee in order to raise awareness on issues of child sexual abuse and to gather financial support for child advocacy centers to help victims and their families.

On Tue., Nov. 9, Andrea Conte walked from Tullahoma to Manchester, on which she was joined by Inman Group Home staff and students, who participated in this leg of Andrea Walks. Inman staff and students manned two water stations and then continued on the walk. The group home, which is located just off of Highway 55 along the route, also proudly provided lunch for Conte, her walkers and her security staff.

Two group home students were quite excited to have completed the 10.9-mile walk with the First Lady. They spent time talking with her, discussing their placement and just enjoying her company. At the end of the walk, the First Lady had her picture taken with the students.

"All Politics Are Local"

Submitted by David Braam, Legislative Liaison

The late Speaker of the House, Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, was famous for the saying "All politics are local," and he even titled his autobiography, *All Politics Are Local*. In my decade of lobbying in our state's legislature, I have yet to find another adage that describes politics and the motivation of politicians better than Speaker O'Neill's. My three months at the Department of Children's Services have crystallized that belief more than I could have anticipated.

To read newspapers, watch television or listen to talk radio, one would think that the sole factors motivating our elected officials' decisions are dinners in smoke-filled steak houses with lobbyists or campaign contribution lists. We must give our legislators far more credit. This is merely a quick and easy stereotype to draw when searching for the influences and factors that move legislative decision-making.

The strongest and, perhaps, most persuasive influence - and also the hardest to measure - can often be that of a single constituent back home. The influence of a corps of lobbyists pales against the story of a single mother who has lost her TennCare coverage or a family that has lost a child. The plight of one Tennessean can easily become the center of discussion when approving a department's budget or drive the debate and determine the success or failure of major pieces of legislation.

As a department, DCS is particularly vulnerable to the power of our constituents' influence on public debate and legislative perception. Our staff seldom has the luxury of being

involved in positive situations. DCS deals in difficult and often heartbreaking situations that take a tremendous amount of professional and personal effort to navigate.

In three months, I have seen how the local nature of our work affects the political perception of our department. I receive calls from legislators every day asking me to help mitigate a situation with a constituent in their hometown. In every instance, as I have investigated individual legislative inquiries, I have been impressed by the professional standards of the department's staff in the field and the commitment to the families they are dealing with in arguably the hardest times those families face. This gives me great faith in our field staff and confidence in delivering our message to elected officials when individual cases reach their attention.

As we approach the legislative session, I feel sure that we will face unexpected challenges. Every agency does. I am confident that the good work of this department will naturally be revealed, and that our elected officials will view DCS in their home communities as a valuable asset for the state and, most importantly, for their constituents back home. This will make our job on Capitol Hill a great deal easier as we continue to usher in meaningful changes for DCS.

Are you Missing Out on a Chance to Save Taxes?

Submitted by Nicole Ramey

The Flexible Benefits Plan is an employee benefit, which will allow you to save taxes by paying certain expenses from your pre-tax salary rather than your after-tax salary. All state employees with a regular paycheck are eligible to participate in the State of Tennessee's Flexible Benefits Plan.

You save both federal income tax and Social Security tax on any eligible out-of-pocket medical expenses or dependent day care expenses you pay through the plan. The best part is that those taxes aren't just postponed – they are waived forever! You have to plan the amount of your expenses in advance for 2005. You decide how much to set aside each pay period for Flex medical or dependent care expenses. Each pay period a tax-free deduction is taken from your paycheck. Once you have incurred eligible medical or dependent care expenses, simply submit a claim form with receipts to the Flexible Benefits Plan and a reimbursement payment will be direct deposited into your bank account.

You may use the plan to pay medical expenses not covered by insurance and /or dependent care expenses. Common medical expenses include predictable prescription drug bills or co-pays, insurance deductible, glasses or contacts, periodic dental cleaning and certain over-the-counter drugs such as Claritin, Prilosec, LASIK, orthodontia, ibuprofen and major medical or dental expenses. New this year to the list of authorized expenses are dietary supplements and additional allowances for weight loss programs. You must have written documentation from your physician indicating the medical necessity of the supplement as part of your treatment plan. **Remember:** Reimbursement of these out-of-pocket expenses is not only for you, but also includes your spouse and dependent children.

The Annual Enrollment for Flexible Benefits will be held November 15-December 1. You may enroll in the Medical Reimbursement Account or the Dependent Care Reimbursement Account for 2005 during this time. Forms may also be obtained at the program's Web site or Personnel.

For further information or assistance please call the Flex Line at (615) 741-3131 or visit the Web site at www.treasury.state.tn.us/flex.

CORE Leadership

CORE Leadership Meeting Beth Kasch, Presiding November 9, 2004

John B. & Grier - Big Picture Issues

Mary Beth Franklyn discussed her Top 10 list of issues addressing these lawsuits.

10. Additional outreach to children at risk of custody. Beth Kasch will be addressing this area.

9. Behavioral Health Services.

8. Medical Passport. Tricia Henwood and nurses are addressing this area.

7. DCS Provider Network. Suzanne White is revamping exception waivers and will present to Core Leadership. Do we want to integrate statewide CQI with statewide Cross Functional Provider Team?

6. Appeals. We need to be responding to the TennCare representatives.

5. Tracking Support: SAT and TNKids. On track for the 05/05 build; medical ECP will include medication and appointment information.

4. Notice of Action: Proof. We are sending these, but we need to use information from file review (TL and TC are doing this now). The plan is to pull random samples and fold it into the CQI process.

3. SAT Data. Information needs to get from case manager to SAT coordinator.

2. EPSDT Screenings. We need to have adequate documentation in detail on the Brian A. screen in 30 days. Regions will develop action plan to target 30 days.

1. Implement Best Practice.

Mary Beth gave a handout on Due Process for Grier Top Five for the next 3-6 months.

1. Notice of Action.

- Use TNKids data and SAT data to ensure that notices of action and permanency plans are being sent to consumer advocates.
- Use File Review Tools to ensure that notices of action are being sent as required.
- Team leader reviews.
- Use information in CQI process to make improvements.
- Health Unit reviews.
- Implement file review.

2. SAT Data (Services and Appeals Tracking).

- Ensure Timely SATdata on Identified Services, appointments and completed services.
- Make appointments for services identified on the permanency plan within 30 days and provide appointment information (and then completed appointment information) to the SAT coordinator.

3. Appeals.

- Respond to appeals positively, proactively and in a timely fashion.
- Implement directives and respond in a timely fashion.

4. Tracking Support: SAT and TNKids.

- Develop Appeals tracking for SAT (Phase 3).
- Implement SAT components into TNKids with '05 release.

5. Implement Best Practice (for due process).

Path to Excellence:

Core Leadership staff verbalized a brief update on Path to Excellence progress to date. Bonnie Hommrich presented this information in the Weekly Wrap Up two weeks ago.

Committee on Multicultural Affairs:

The next meeting of the Committee on Multicultural Affairs has been scheduled for Dec 2-3.

Policy Steering Committee:

This committee meets weekly and includes program staff. The goal is to have all policies revised by April 2005.

Job Performance Evaluations:

RAs are forming subcommittees to make sure all job classes have catalogues and appropriate performance evaluations. The goal is to make job performance evaluations match performance evaluations and outcomes.

CFTM:

We want to get regional plans more in format with Path to Excellence work plans.

Next Week:

Suzanne White will discuss performance based contracting and placement waivers/exceptions.

CQI In Action

Submitted by Daryl Chansuthus,

Mid-Cumberland Region CQI News

The Mid Cumberland region is swinging into action with CQI. They've already held two management-level meetings and have developed a structure and plan for meetings in 2005. Mary Ann Dotson, the Mid-Cumberland CQI coordinator, has done a great job of getting CQI off to a strong start in her region. An excerpt from the Mid-Cumberland Regional CQI Meeting on Nov. 10 may provide ideas for other regions as they actively work to implement a CQI process.

Discussion followed that team coordinators in each county will divide all staff into teams. It was also recommended that the teams initially be grouped by function. Wanda Bush reported that she and Amelia Wallace had divided the Montgomery /Stewart County cluster into five teams, including one team of clerical staff.

The focus for developing CQI teams will be that every staff person is a member of a team, and that everyone will have an equal voice in team discussions. Semetta Pulley reminded everyone that teams will need to determine timeframes for responses to their requests.

It was suggested that the department's key outcome areas become the focus of Mid-Cumberland's rollout from the start. CQI should also be presented to staff in a positive manner with guidelines designed to keep the experience from becoming cumbersome, such as limiting meeting time to 90 minutes and copying the minutes to everyone. The team meeting should be structured with a facilitator, scribe and timekeeper. Moreover, these responsibilities should be rotated among team members. Teams will also be provided three formats to select from to send their issues up the chain.

In regard to the December 31 deadline for rolling out CQI in Mid-Cumberland, we determined that due to the impending holiday season, it would not be feasible to expect to do four or five regional meetings in the next six weeks. It was determined that staff would secure locations large enough to accommodate many people in different sections of the region. Two meetings will be planned to occur between December 6-17. The Nashville Police Precinct building on Harding Place and Antioch Pike (Nashville), the new Franklin

Library (Williamson County), the McFadden Community Center in Murfreesboro (Rutherford County) and Amelia Wallace's church building or the Health Department in Clarksville (Montgomery County) were identified as possible sites. Staff local to those areas will contact each facility and bring the information back to the committee. It was determined the presentation meeting will be 90 minutes long. They will be scheduled between 10 a.m.-noon or from 1-3 p.m., depending on availability at the facility. Committees for the presentation at each site will be determined at the next meeting.

Veronica Peters will be contacted to assist in setting the number of slots for all staff at each meeting and using the computer program she already has available to reserve slots at the request of each staff member for the meeting time and place that they choose. Her information will be the back-up that all staff has participated.

Beth Mitchell will contact the personnel techs in the region provide the committee with the current list of staff. Members chose Barbara Wolfe as scribe, Kim Moore as facilitator (timekeeper) and Mary Ann Dotson as leader for this group.

The next meeting for this committee is scheduled for Thu., Dec. 2, at 9:30 a.m. at the Center for Adoption.

Southeast Region CQI News

The Southeast Region is in the news again with their CQI work! Elaine Hong, Southeast CQI coordinator, reported her pride in her region's acceptance of the CQI process and her gratefulness for the strong support of her region's senior management team. In their second CQI meeting, Southeast team leaders fine-tuned their action plan. As Elaine reports, "They got in there and got the work done in about 30 minutes with enthusiasm and determination. They are developing an excel spreadsheet with identified resource staff in each cluster to be distributed to all case managers and staff. Some of the resources they are identifying are who has experience in ICPC/ICJ, who has worked through getting a conservator for a child, who has basic computer knowledge, who can serve as a resource for delinquent runaways, who has had to extradite a JJ child."

Congratulations to the Southeast Region's management team for their commitment to the CQI process and to Elaine Hong for her dedicated efforts to roll out CQI in a timely and effective manner!

County CQI News

Michael Gloss in Clarksville wrote to share with us his county team's discussion of the CQI process and to ask about where suggestions for improvement could be made. I was so excited when I wrote back to Michael that I probably scared him off! My apologies, Michael!

As for Michael's question about where suggestions for improvement can be made: When your CQI teams are up and running, use them to introduce your suggestions for improvement. Make sure they are recorded in your meeting minutes so that they can be shared within your region and across the state. And, of course, you can write to me to share your suggestions any time.

Regional CQI Coordinators' Meeting

The first face-to-face meeting of regional CQI coordinators will occur in Nashville in December. The agenda with dates and times and places will be published in the next Weekly Wrap Up.

The latest list of confirmed regional CQI coordinators includes the following:

Southwest	Clay Crook
Northwest	Tracy Brignac
Mid-Cumberland	Mary Ann Dotson
Davidson	Peggy Carter
Hamilton	Jeff Robinson
Southeast	Elaine Hong
East TN	Melody Valentine
Knox	Denise Wilson
Northeast	Chris Johnson

The Central Office Division of Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement has also designated staff as CQI liaisons to the grand regions and for YDCs and group homes. They include the following:

Western Grand Region	Linda Fenderson-Doss and Karen Davenport
Middle Grand Region	Ted Slifer
Eastern Grand Region	Semetta Pulley and Daryl Chansuthus
YDCs and Group Homes	Angela Burden and Daryl Chansuthus

These liaisons will be in regular contact with the regions and will be available to spend time in regions that need help getting their CQI process up and running.



Nothing endures but change.

-Heraclitus

Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

-Abraham Lincoln

